

5/16/2016

To: Instructional Quality Commission

Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD)

California Department of Education

1430 N Street, Room 3207, Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

We are parents of California students, and we want to thank the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) for its support of a textbook curriculum framework inclusive of our South Asian histories.

We have roots in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and beyond. We are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian, agnostic, and atheist, and are from families deemed both upper and lower caste. We all agree on one thing: we want our children, and all Californian children, to be exposed to the rich and diverse histories of South Asia.

We are disappointed that religious lobby groups are attempting to erase the rich, diverse and complex histories of South Asia by:

- erasing the roots of Sikhism (edits 28425)
- portraying Muslims as dangerous foreigners (2850)
- erasing the history of Sri Lanka, and of the Tamil and Telugu languages (2465)
- obfuscating the history of caste, and erasing the word "Dalit" (edits 13545, 25024, 25103, 2537, 2539)

We thank the IQC for blocking these unwanted changes, while supporting most of the South Asia Faculty Group's edits. These choices demonstrate a commitment to

accuracy and fairness for all our diverse communities, instead of only one narrow segment.

We believe that our children—and all children—will benefit from learning about the diversity and complexity of the South Asian subcontinent. To subsume our diverse histories under a single Hindu/Indiancentric umbrella is historically inaccurate, culturally insensitive, and ultimately dangerous.

Lobby groups are mounting a PR campaign associating the bullying of Hindu children with teaching about caste in their schools. They imply that this bullying can be solved by erasing references to the caste system from history textbooks. In reality, our children—regardless of their religion—are being targeted primarily because of racism, antiimmigrant sentiment, and Islamophobia. This bullying accelerated after 9/11, and has increased again during the 2016 election, as candidates spew xenophobic rhetoric. These are profound problems that cannot be solved by censoring history textbooks.

When lobby groups push false solutions to the bullying our children face, it distracts us from real solutions that would actually help them, like AB2485, the Safe Place to Learn Act, which would institute a comprehensive statewide plan to address xenophobic bullying in California schools. We urge the California Department of Education and the IQC to defend our textbooks from these bullying censorship tactics.

Thank you for your support for our diverse South Asian communities.

Monisha Bajaj

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(Bay Area Progressive Desi Families, member of the South Asian Histories for All Coalition)

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